

Remarks Announcing a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Test Ban

August 11, 1995

Good afternoon. Today I am announcing my decision to negotiate a true zero yield comprehensive test ban. This is an historic milestone in our efforts to reduce the nuclear threat to build a safer world. The United States will now insist on a test ban that prohibits any nuclear weapons test explosion or any other nuclear explosion. I am convinced this decision will speed the negotiations so that we can achieve our goal of signing a comprehensive test ban next year.

As a central part of this decision, I am establishing concrete, specific safeguards that define the conditions under which the United States will enter into a comprehensive test ban. These safeguards will strengthen our commitments in the areas of intelligence monitoring and verification, stockpile stewardship, maintenance of our nuclear laboratories, and test readiness.

They also specify the circumstances under which I would be prepared, in consultation with Congress, to exercise our supreme national interest rights under a comprehensive test ban to conduct necessary testing if the safety or reliability of our nuclear deterrent could no longer be certified.

As a part of this arrangement I am today directing the establishment of a new annual reporting and certification requirement that will ensure that our nuclear weapons remain safe and reliable under a comprehensive test ban.

I appreciate the time, the energy, and the wisdom that the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Energy; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Directors of Central Intelligence and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency have all devoted to the review of this crucial national security issue over the last several months.

American leaders since Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy have believed a comprehensive test ban would be a major stride toward stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Now, as then, such a treaty would greatly strengthen the security of the United States and nations throughout the world. But

now, unlike then, such a treaty is within our reach.

It would build upon the successes we have achieved so far: Securing a permanent extension of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty; freezing North Korea's nuclear program; cutting existing nuclear arsenals by putting the START I Treaty into force; persuading Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to give up their nuclear weapons and to reach agreements with Russia that now mean that both our nations no longer target our missiles at each other.

A comprehensive test ban is the right step as we continue pulling back from the nuclear precipice, a precipice which we began to live with 50 years ago this week. It moves us one step closer to the day when no nuclear weapons are detonated anywhere on the face of the Earth.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m., in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Statement on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Test Ban

August 11, 1995

One of my administration's highest priorities is to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) to reduce the danger posed by nuclear weapons proliferation. To advance that goal and secure the strongest possible treaty, I am announcing today my decision to seek a zero yield CTBT. A zero yield CTBT would ban any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion immediately upon entry into force. I hope it will lead to an early consensus among all states at the negotiating table.

Achieving a CTBT was a goal of both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. Now, as then, such a treaty would greatly strengthen U.S. and global security and create another barrier to nuclear proliferation and nuclear weapons development. At the conclusion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May, all parties to that treaty agreed to work to complete a CTBT no later than 1996. Today, I want to reaffirm our commitment to do everything possible to conclude the CTBT negotiations as soon